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Statement submitted by WaterLex, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

WaterLex hereby presents a written statement on the role of national human rights institutions in supporting the transition and future monitoring of sustainable development goals. The statement's purpose is to shed light on the important role national human rights institutions may play in the future accountability mechanism of the post-2015 development agenda, particularly regarding water and sanitation.

Whilst the water-related target enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals has been formally met by halving the proportion of people without access to improved water sources by 2015, significant problems remain unresolved. An estimated 780 million people still lack access to improved sources of drinking water and 2.5 billion people lack access to an improved sanitation facility. The use of human-rights definitions reveal an even more alarming reality: 2.1 billion people lack access to improved water sources and 4.1 billion people are without improved sanitation.

With the adoption of the sustainable development goals later this year, the transition from the Millennium Development Goals offers crucial momentum to advance human rights-based sustainable development. The international community needs to use this unique opportunity to take important steps towards a human rights-based water governance. The proposed Sustainable Development Goal 6 to "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" promotes major development outcomes. At the same time, a strong accountability framework is needed to secure the effective and timely implementation of this goal.

National human rights institutions are uniquely placed to ensure a human rights-based monitoring of the implementation of the post-2015 agenda. The unique role of these institutions is to ensure that monitoring is designed to track adherence to the commitments under international and national human rights law. This requires a significantly different methodology to that used to track the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, the mandate of national human rights institutions is not restricted to monitoring and information-gathering. They have constitutional powers to promote and protect human rights.

Several national human rights institutions already have substantial experience in monitoring and protecting human rights in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, including water and sanitation. These institutions can play an important role in giving practical effect to the commitments contained in the sustainable development goals at both national and international level. National human rights institutions can inform international accountability mechanisms related to the implementation of the post-2015 agenda and can also influence national implementation of the sustainable development goals. They can act as a catalyst for monitoring that is participatory, evidence based, transparent and accountable.

Therefore, we recommend that national human rights institutions be involved in the Global Expanded Water Monitoring Initiative to monitor the post-2015 development agenda.